

Steinway Upright Restoration Project

Day 4

This was a day I looked forward to with great anticipation. Although a number of chapter members had conflicts and could not attend, four members were able to take a day off of work and help out. We spent the morning working, took a break to go to Jimmy's Bar-B-Que for lunch, then came back to the shop to work some more.

The primary focus of the day was to remove the old pinblock using the specialized tool that Christian Bolduc had sent us to try out. Using a saw for this job would require a 24" circular blade - not a tool I would want to try to use. A router would be easier, but would obliterate the old pinblock. With the tool Christian sent, it would be possible to remove the entire pinblock without disturbing the surface area. Later referencing could thus be done.

The other task I wanted to get to was the marking and cutting of the new pinblocks sent by the three manufacturers: Bolduc, WNG and Central Michigan Piano. The idea, as has been explained, is to cut and fit all three pinblocks. Each pinblock will be marked for the pinholes, then partially drilled out. Finally, a third of each pinblock will be glued in place and drilled in the piano. This way, chapter members who attend will be able to go through the entire process and gain experience with each step of the process.

Each work day spent on the Steinway convince me more that this type of group project is an invaluable experience. A very heartfelt camaraderie develops between the kindred spirits who meet for no other purpose than to share a day of work and to try out new procedures. It's fun and instructive at the same time.

When the piano is finished, at some point in the future, it will be an honor to be able to sell the piano to someone who will give it a good home, and to donate the proceeds to charity. In the meantime, we will continue to have a great time meeting and working together.

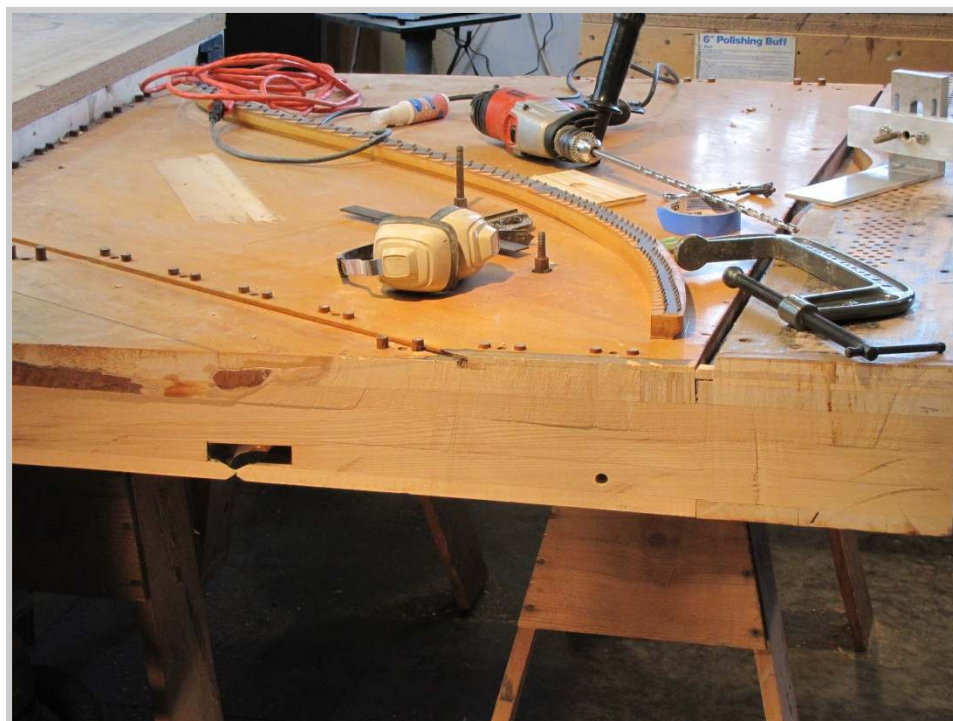


Photo 98: With the piano flat on its back and the tools out and ready to go all that's needed are the volunteers to do the work.



Photo 99: Neil Donald starts off the day by adjusting the jig from Bolduc Piano that will be used in undercutting the old pinblock. Here he sets the depth for the drill bit guide. The beauty of this system is that the face of the pinblock is preserved for later reference. If a router were used, there would be nothing left of the old block to refer to.

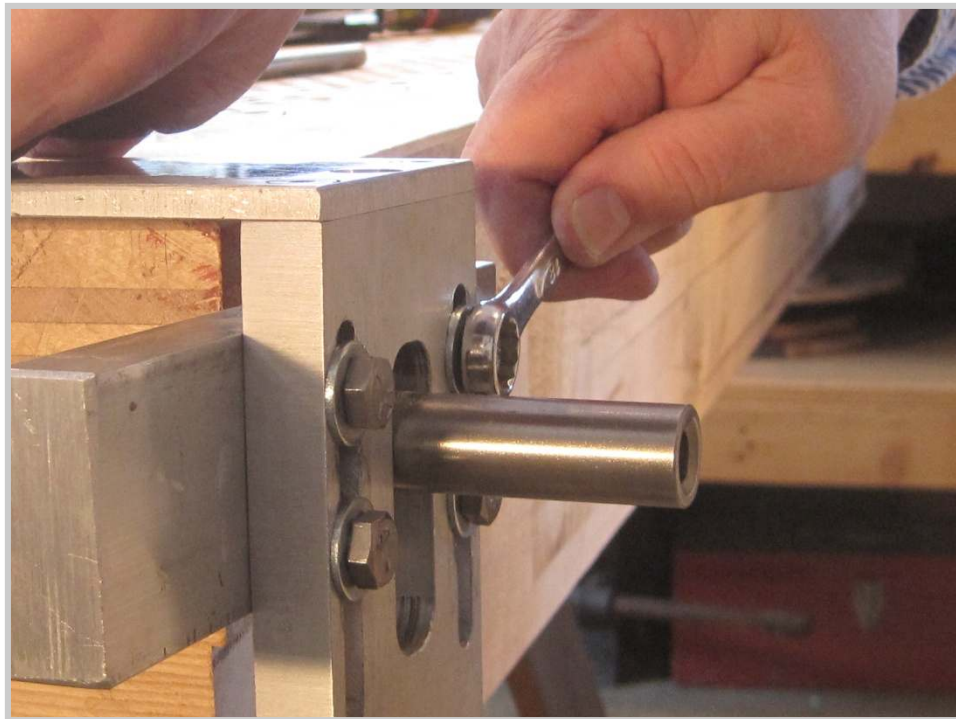


Photo 100: The adjustment for the drill bit guide is simple, effective and solid.



Photo 101: Chapter member Angelo Georgou tries drilling one of the first holes. Despite a new bit, drilling through the century old hard rock maple is tough going. You must firmly lean into the drill to advance the bit.

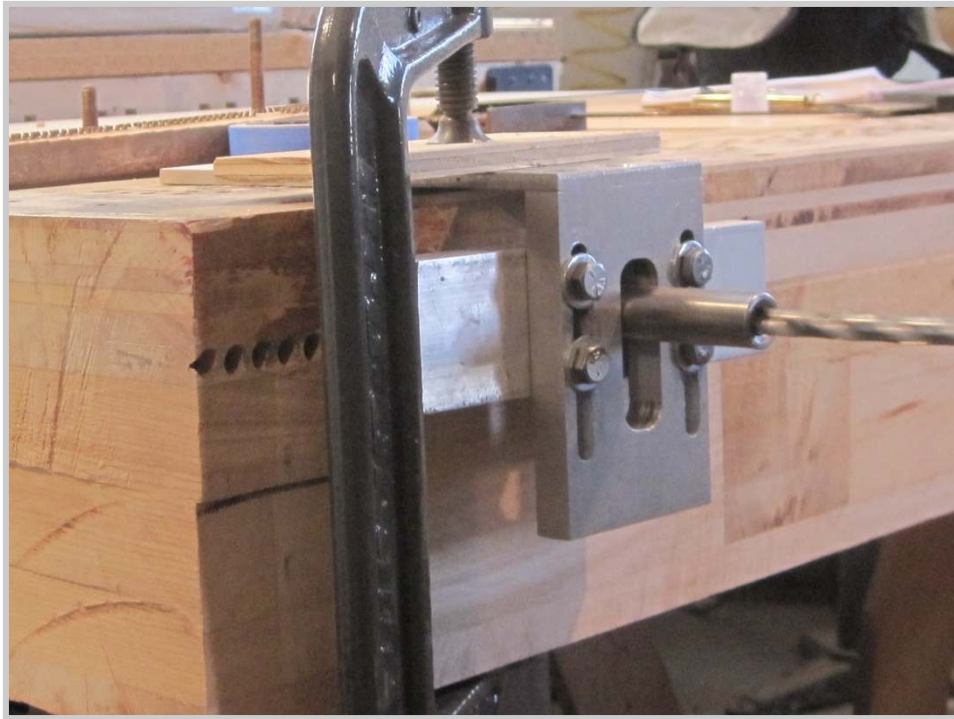


Photo 102: After each hole is drilled, the jig is moved to the right. A post on the inside of the jig fits in the previously drilled hole to lock the jig in position from side to side. The c-clamp keeps the jig set at the right level.



Photo 103: Advancing the jig after each hole is drilled becomes a team activity, with one person removing the clamp and the other person squaring the jig up.

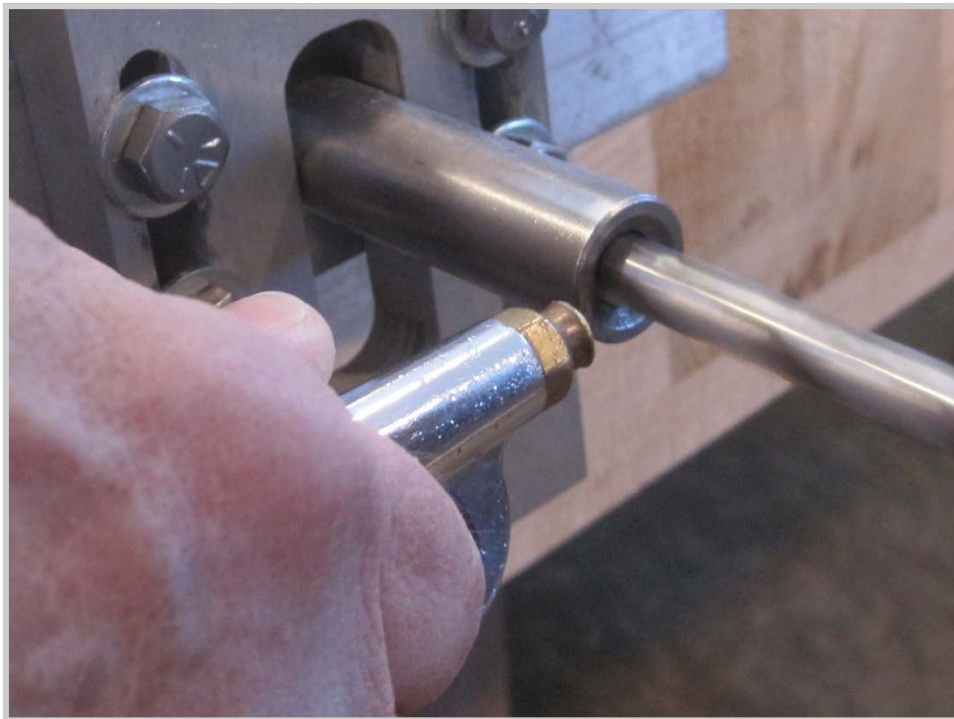


Photo 104: To keep the bit cool, a stream of compressed air was kept on the drill at the entry point to the drill bit guide. This also helps the flutes of the drill from clogging.



Photo 105: As the drilling progresses, chapter members switch off to give everyone a chance to try out the process. The blue tape on the bit marks the depth of the hole to be drilled.



Photos 106 - 109: Steve Haag, Angelo Georgou, Don Neil and Annie Grieshop all take a turn. If this job were being done by one technician, it would make for a long and tiring morning or afternoon.





Photo 110: As the line of holes length, the process of resetting the jig becomes more efficient, with the chapter members working together like a pit crew at NASCAR changing tires.



Photo 111: By mid-afternoon, the line of holes extends most of the distance to the opposite side of the pinblock. Not enough to complete the removal on this day, but close enough that an easy morning of work at the next meeting will finish the job.



Photo 112: To round the day out, the decision is made to spend the remaining time in cutting the new pinblocks. The first step is to unroll contractor paper over the old pinblock to mark the lower edge of the pinblock. On this piano, unlike on most uprights, the pinblock is fitted to a flange on the underside of the cast iron plate.

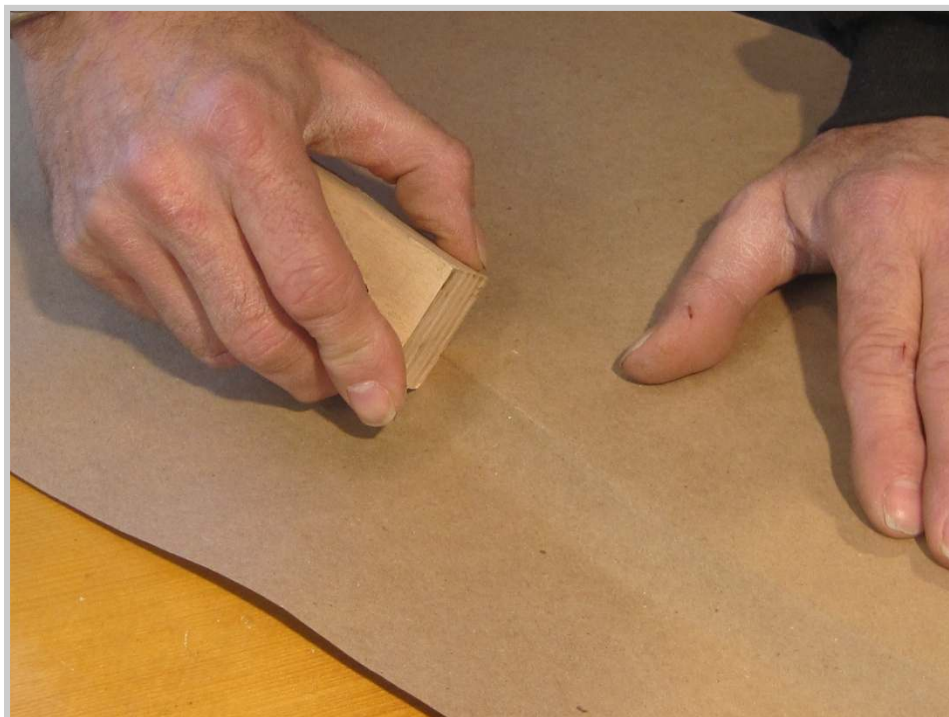


Photo 113: A scrap of pinblock material is used to make a crease in the contractor paper to mark the edge of the pinblock.



Photo 113: Annie cuts the pattern.



Photo 114: She then uses a marker to transfer the line produced to one of the new pinblocks.



Photo 115: From top to bottom, the new pinblocks from Central Michigan Piano, Pianos André Bolduc and Wessell, Nickel and Gross. All three are great examples of premium pinblocks.



Photo 116: The quality of these blocks is crystal clear when they are viewed from the side. .



Photo 117: The slant of the cut is marked on the side of the pinblock.



Photo 118: The 3/4" blade is set at a 3.5 degree angle to the table to match the angle of the inside of the flange on the cast iron plate. The closer the match of the cut surface of the pinblock to the flange, the less work will need to be spent in fitting the pinblock.



Photo 119: The WNG block is fed into the saw, with a person on either end and one in the center. The new blade cuts easily through the 2" maple, with no strain on the band saw.



Photo 120: The Central Michigan block being cut, with the person to the left guiding the pinblock through the curves, and the person on the right stabilizing the pinblock as it comes off the table of the saw.



Photo 121: Don Neil finishes the cut on the WNG pinblock.



Photo 122: The fit of the Bolduc pinblock to the cast iron plate is checked out. A bit of grinding will need to be done on all three of the pinblocks to complete the fitting process.

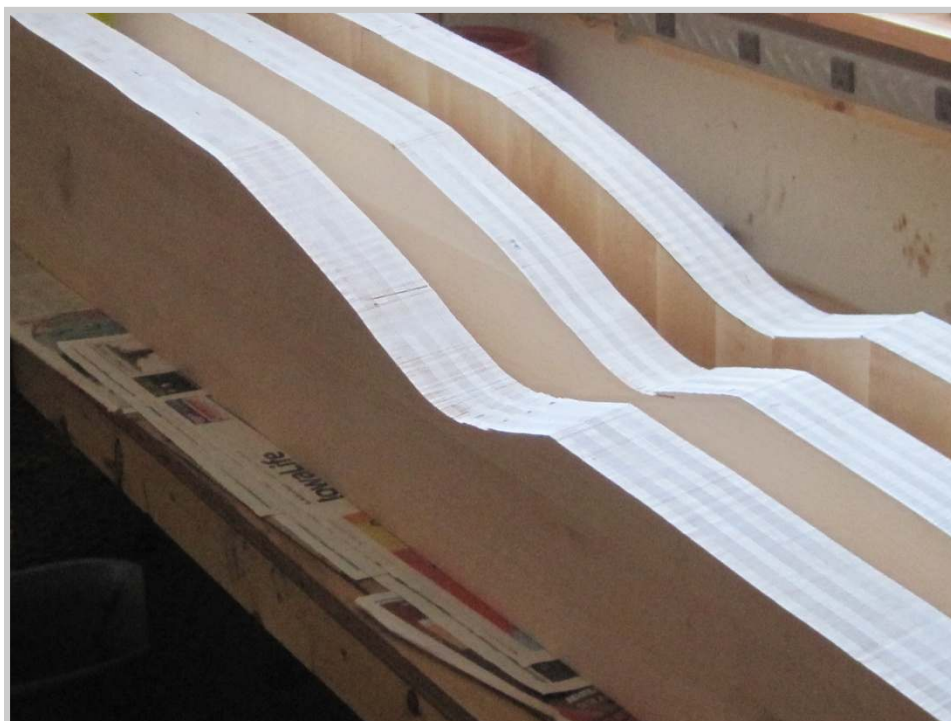


Photo 123: The three cut pinblocks side by side. By the time they are all fitted, everyone will have experience with the process involved.



Photo 124: The flange of the cast iron plate that the pinblock will be fitted up against.